

SENATE PLEDGE  
SEN. BLAKE AMERSON  
SEN. BOB CORKER, TENNESSEE  
SEN. CHRIS CROMMIE, KANSAS  
SEN. DAN CLAYTON, ALABAMA  
SEN. DEAN BLUNDY, INDIANA  
SEN. JAMES INHORN, OKLAHOMA  
SEN. LEE MITCHELL  
SEN. ROBERT W. WILSON  
SEN. STEVE DODD, CONNECTICUT  
SEN. TERRY L. GAVIN, ILLINOIS  
SEN. TERRY L. GAVIN, ILLINOIS

SEN. AL FRANKEN, MINNESOTA  
SEN. ARLEN SPECTER, PENNSYLVANIA  
SEN. BEN RAY, MISSISSIPPI  
SEN. BOB CORKER, TENNESSEE  
SEN. CHRIS CROMMIE, KANSAS  
SEN. DAN CLAYTON, ALABAMA  
SEN. DEAN BLUNDY, INDIANA  
SEN. JAMES INHORN, OKLAHOMA  
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SEN. STEVE DODD, CONNECTICUT  
SEN. TERRY L. GAVIN, ILLINOIS  
SEN. TERRY L. GAVIN, ILLINOIS

## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

209

March 10, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St., SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the sole federal agency to which Congress has conferred direct regulatory responsibility over the nation's media.

Media independence is a hallmark of this great nation – which is why it is troubling to hear various members of the administration openly attack the media.

As FCC chairman, you have direct authority over the nation's broadcast and media marketplace. Your independent agency controls whether broadcast stations are allowed access to the U.S. airwaves, oversees elements of the contractual relationships between media outlets and their distribution partners, renders judgements on mergers and acquisitions of media properties, and issues regulations that can affect the financial future of major media companies. And ultimately, the decisions that you, your fellow commissioners, and the agency staff which you oversee make affect the viability and sustainability of news media.

However, we find your lack of full transparency at this week's hearing in the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on FCC oversight to be unfortunate for someone who has been renominated to head the commission. Specifically, your refusal to answer straightforward questions about how you view the media and whether you will uphold the First Amendment rights of journalists and media outlets is concerning.

While you have long claimed to be an advocate for the freedom of the press and the First Amendment, your silence on the matter and refusal to take a stand against threats levied at the media is troubling given your regulatory and oversight role over the industry.

Moreover, such a lack of response could call into question the ongoing independence of the FCC under your watch.

Accordingly, we ask you to respond directly, fully, and individually to the questions below, which will inform our ongoing consideration of your renomination for an additional five-year term on the FCC.

- 1) Do you believe the media is the “enemy” of the American people?
- 2) Can you assure us that you will exercise your authority as chairman of the FCC to regulate the media in an impartial manner?
- 3) Will you commit to us that the FCC will not act in a manner that violates the First Amendment and stifles or penalizes free speech by electronic media, directly or indirectly, even if requested by the administration?
- 4) Did you commit to the administration, as a condition for your elevation or renomination as chairman of the FCC, to take any action against a specific media entity or generally against broadcast entities, cable network owners or other media outlets?
- 5) Will you commit to us that you will exercise your authority as chairman of the FCC in a manner that fully respects the absolute independence of the agency from the executive branch?
- 6) Finally, will you commit to inform us and the public of any attempt by the White House or by any executive branch official to influence your decision-making or direct you to take or not take any action with respect to media interests within your jurisdiction, including the license renewal applications for broadcasters (whether or not such contacts fall under the ex parte rules or other legal or ethical rules applicable to the FCC)?

Please provide your responses no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, March 17, 2017.

Sincerely,



BILL NELSON  
Ranking Member



TOM UDALL  
Member



MARGARET WOOD HASSAN  
Member



MARIA CANTWELL  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee  
on Aviation Operations, Safety,  
and Security



AMY KLOBUCHAR  
Member




RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee  
on Consumer Protection, Product  
Safety, Insurance, and Data  
Security



BRIAN SCHATZ  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee  
on Communications, Technology,  
Innovation, and the Internet



EDWARD J. MARKEY  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee  
on Space, Science, and  
Competitiveness



CORY A. BOOKER  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee  
on Surface Transportation and  
Merchant Marine Infrastructure,  
Safety, and Security



GARY C. PETERS  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee  
on Oceans, Atmosphere,  
Fisheries, and Coast Guard



TAMMY BALDWIN  
Member



TAMMY DUCKWORTH  
Member



CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO  
Member

cc: The Honorable John Thune, Chairman





OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senate  
717 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Baldwin:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on The Boston Globe's investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

So long as I am privileged to serve as Chairman, I will continue to respect the First Amendment.

I should note that at the hearing, I was asked if I agreed with the President that the media was the "enemy" of the people. However, the President has made clear that he was referring to "fake news." As I stated at the hearing, these comments are part of a larger political debate into which I will not be wading.

With that in mind, here are my answers to the specific questions you ask in your letter:

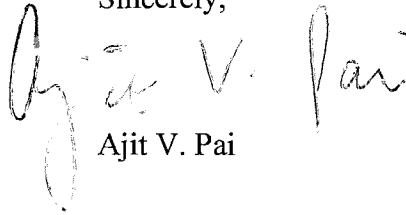
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

Page 2—The Honorable Tammy Baldwin

As Chairman of the FCC, I take my oath to defend and protect the Constitution seriously. And the preservation of the First Amendment is the foundation of that commitment.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate  
706 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on *The Boston Globe's* investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

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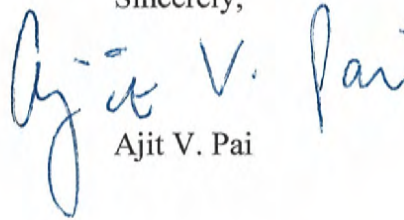
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

Page 2—The Honorable Richard Blumenthal

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Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Ajit V. Pai





OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Cory Booker  
United States Senate  
359 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Booker:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on *The Boston Globe's* investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

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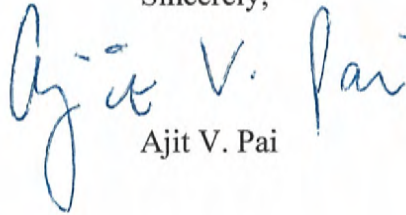
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

Page 2—The Honorable Cory Booker

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Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
United States Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on *The Boston Globe's* investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

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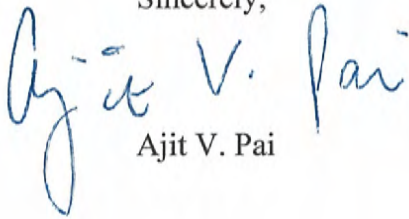
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

Page 2—The Honorable Maria Cantwell

As Chairman of the FCC, I take my oath to defend and protect the Constitution seriously. And the preservation of the First Amendment is the foundation of that commitment.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Ajit V. Pai





OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senate  
B40A Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cortez Masto:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on The Boston Globe's investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

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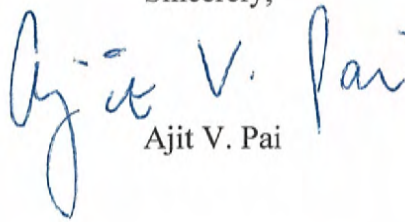
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

Page 2—The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto

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Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

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Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senate  
G12 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Duckworth:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on The Boston Globe's investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

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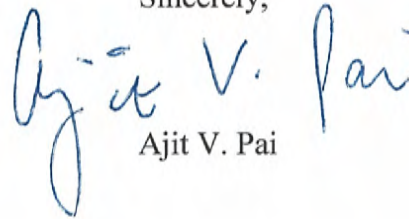
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

Page 2—The Honorable Tammy Duckworth

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Ajit V. Pai





OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Maggie Hassan  
United States Senate  
B85 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Hassan:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on *The Boston Globe's* investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

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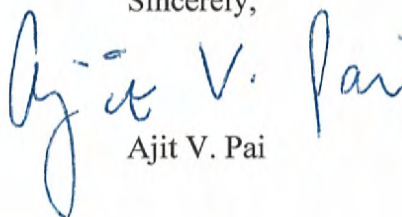
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

Page 2—The Honorable Maggie Hassan

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Sincerely,

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Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senate  
302 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on *The Boston Globe's* investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

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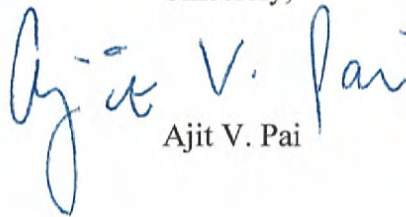
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

Page 2—The Honorable Amy Klobuchar

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Sincerely,

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Ajit V. Pai





OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Edward J. Markey  
United States Senate  
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Markey:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on The Boston Globe's investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

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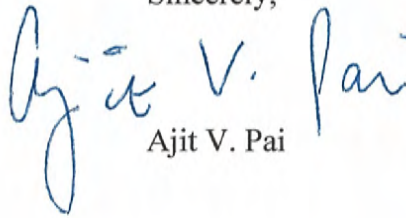
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

Page 2—The Honorable Edward J. Markey

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Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

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Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Bill Nelson  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
United States Senate  
254 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Nelson:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on The Boston Globe's investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

So long as I am privileged to serve as Chairman, I will continue to respect the First Amendment.

I should note that at the hearing, I was asked if I agreed with the President that the media was the "enemy" of the people. However, the President has made clear that he was referring to "fake news." As I stated at the hearing, these comments are part of a larger political debate into which I will not be wading.

With that in mind, here are my answers to the specific questions you ask in your letter:

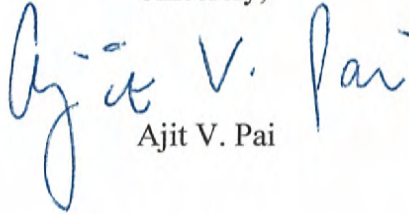
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.

6. Yes.

As Chairman of the FCC, I take my oath to defend and protect the Constitution seriously. And the preservation of the First Amendment is the foundation of that commitment.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Ajit" is written with a large, looped 'A'. The middle initial "V." is written with a simple 'V' followed by a period. The last name "Pai" is written with a large, looped 'P'.

Ajit V. Pai





OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Gary Peters  
United States Senate  
724 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Peters:

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A free media is vital to our democracy. That is why during my time at the Commission I have consistently opposed any effort to infringe upon the freedom of the press and have fought to eliminate regulations that impede the gathering and dissemination of news. For example, in my 2016 dissent to the Commission's media ownership order, I said, "[o]f course, newspaper reporters continue to do important work throughout our country each and every day. Many were recently reminded of the impact that their stories can have through the 2015 film *Spotlight*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The movie focused on *The Boston Globe's* investigation into widespread child sex abuse by Roman Catholic priests in and around Boston—reporting that ended up having a worldwide impact on the Catholic Church. But given the newspaper industry's profound financial troubles, it is becoming harder and harder for publications to do this type of investigatory journalism, hold our elected officials to account, and let Americans know what is going on in their communities."

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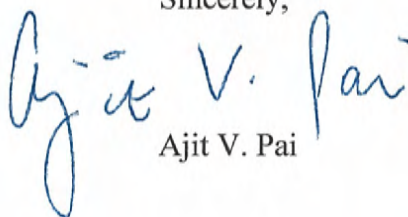
1. No.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

Page 2—The Honorable Gary Peters

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Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
United States Senate  
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schatz:

Thank you for your letter following up on the recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate my strong support for the First Amendment rights of the media and all Americans.

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2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.

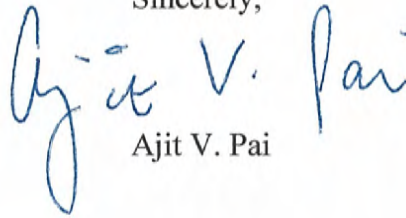
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Ajit V. Pai





OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Tom Udall  
United States Senate  
531 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Udall:

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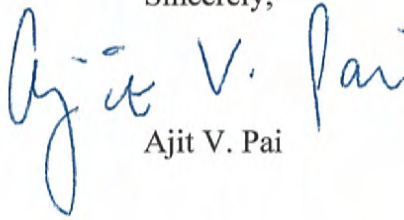
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2. Yes.
3. Yes.
4. No.
5. Yes.
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Page 2—The Honorable Tom Udall

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